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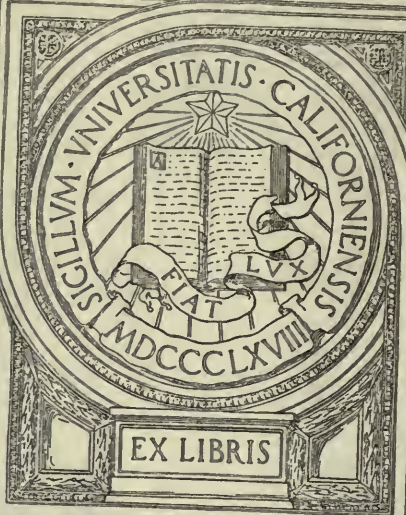
THE CIRCLE AND THE SWORD

by

J.M.Plunkett.

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THE CIRCLE AND THE SWORD



BY JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT



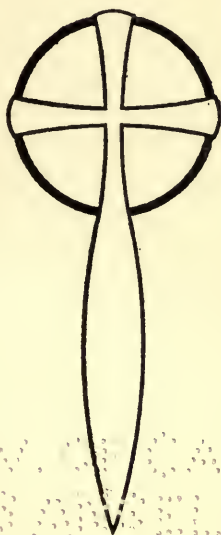
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THE CIRCLE AND THE SWORD

THE CIRCLE AND THE SWORD

BY JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT



MAUNSEL & COMPANY, LIMITED,
96 MIDDLE ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN

1911



ADDITIONAL TO VOLUME
THIRTY-THREE

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TO
THOMAS MacDONAGH

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I have to thank the Editor of *The Irish Review*,
The Academy and *The Dublin Review* for permission to
republish certain of these poems.

*The Glories of the World Sink Down
in Gloom*

The glories of the world sink down in gloom
And Babylon and Nineveh and all
Of Hell's high strongholds answer to the call,
The silent waving of a sable plume.
But there shall break a day when Death shall loom
For thee, and thine own panoply appal
Thee, like a stallion in a burning stall,
While blood-red stars blaze out in skies of doom.

Lord of sarcophagus and catacomb
Blood-drunken Death ! Within the columned hall
Of time, thou diest when its pillars fall.
Death of all deaths ! Thou diggest thine own tomb,
Makest thy mound of Earth's soon-shattered dome,
And pullest the heavens upon thee for a pall.

*My Heart leaps back in Horror
of the Night*

My heart leaps back in horror of the night
Swallowing up the sun ; a sudden fear
Is on my soul, so dreadful and so drear
The shapeless darkness seems—God ! give me light
Ere the slow Bird of Time's deliberate flight
Brings back the burning symbol of thy sphere,
Or my pierced heart, uplifted on the spear
Of pain, will sink to death in love's despite.

The ground has grown transparent, I can see
The damned in Hell that leap amid the flames
In the earth's centre 'neath my feet, the names
Of legions of lost angels—dazzlingly
The sun shines through the solid earth nor shames,
For want of miracle, the faith in me.

*My Soul is Sick with Longing,
Shaken with Loss*

My soul is sick with longing, shaken with loss,
Yea, shocked with love lost sudden in a dream,
Dream-love dream-taken, swept upon the stream
Of dreaming Truth, dreamt true, yet deemed as dross :
Dreamt Truth that is to waking Truth a gloss,
Dream-love that is the life of loves that seem
To bear the rood of love's eternal theme,
The strength that brings to Calvary their Cross.

I dreamt that love had lit, a burning bird
On one green bough of Time, of that dread tree
Whereto my soul was crucified : that he
Sang with a seraph's voice some wondrous word
Blotting out pain, but swift the branch I heard
Break, withered, and the song ceased suddenly.

*Dark as the Dreams that Fade like
Blossoms Slowly*

Dark as the dreams that fade like blossoms slowly,
Soft as the dew in darkness ever falling,
Dim as the sighs forever calling, calling,
Amid the floating silences of loneliness ;

You came, O Love, and faded with the blossoms,
Withered before the Winter of to-morrow,
Now naught is left save scattered leaves of sorrow
That, sere and dead, lie in the heart of loneliness.

White Dove of the Wild
Dark Eyes

White Dove of the wild dark eyes,
Faint silver flutes are calling
From the night where the star-mists rise
And fire-flies falling
Tremble in starry wise,
Is it you they are calling ?

White Dove of the beating heart,
Shrill golden reeds are trilling
In the woods where the shadows start,
While moonbeams, filling
With dreams the floweret's heart
Its sleep are thrilling.

White Dove of the folded wings,
Soft purple night is crying
With the voices of fairy things
For you, lest dying
They miss your flashing wings,
Your splendorous flying.

*I will arise and Wander Through
the World*

I will arise and wander through the world
Alone, seeking my love, for well I know
She lies deep dreaming by the golden sea,
And fiery phantasies of sleep, impearled
With dew's of dreaming, share her body's glow,
Her hair's soft gleaming by the golden sea.

And I have seen her from a place afar
Where Youth's deep music quivers on the heights,
The hills of sorrow, and have heard the waves
Lapping the silent shore : where one slow star
Has pierced desire, the veil of all delights,
I have beheld her sleeping by the waves.

She sleeps, and dreams that she no longer sleeps,
Her trembling heart impassionate with song :
But her unsleeping soul waits crooning low
Sad tunes, so stately that the golden deeps
Melt into murmurs all the shore along
And lapse to silence in the shallows low.

And I have felt a trembling of the calms
Of silence, and have seen a blinding voice
Move on the waters left all shadowless :
Where glimmering shallows, luminous with psalms
Break to a million rhythms and rejoice
That soon they shall no more be shadowless.

*O Love, when Life has Travelled
Through the Maze*

O Love, when Life has travelled through the maze
Of Poesy and Sorrow, and he saith
“Lo ! I must leave you, for One hasteneth
To lead you hence and set you on your ways :”
Then, if with Love I have left all my days,—
His care shall keep them that they meet not Death,—
Then shall these songs live with them, and their breath
Make beautiful thy beauty’s path of praise.

For, inasmuch as I have sung of thee,
My songs shall break the thunder-charge of Time,
Beautiful with thy beauty shall their rime
Scatter his legions,—then, thy shield to be,
Above the battered centuries shall climb
And for their life give immortality.

When all the Stars become a Memory

When all the stars become a memory
Hid in the heart of Heaven : when the sun
At last is resting from his weary run,
Sinking to glorious silence in the sea
Of God's own glory : when the immensity
Of Nature's universe its fate has won
And its reward : when Death to death is done
And deathless Being's all that is to be—

Your praise shall 'scape the grinding of the mills :
My songs shall live to drive their blinding cars
Through fiery apocalypse to Heaven's bars !
When God's loosed might the prophet's word fulfils,
My songs shall see the ruin of the hills,
My songs shall sing the dirges of the stars.

Your Pride

I sit and beg beside the gate,
I watch and wait to see you pass,
You never pass the portals old,
The gate of gold like gleaming glass.

Yet you have often wandered by,
I've heard you sigh, I've seen you smile,
You never smile now as you stray—
You can but stay a little while.

And now you know your task is hard,
You must discard your jewelled gear,
You must not fear to crave a dole
From any soul that waits you here:

And you have still your regal pride
And you have sighed that I should see
Your gifts to me beside the gate,
Your pride, your great humility.

To her Eyebrow

O shadowy arch above the starry pool
And cloudy marge of beauty, splendid bow
Of promise ! Under sleepy veils of snow
Lies loveliness in slumber dark and cool.
We who have learnt to weep in Sorrow's school
Await her waking, knowing what we know :
Should these dim skies with sorrow fill and flow
Yet all their tears are under rainbow rule.

Beneath thy span, O heaven-surmounting arch,
The eternal shadows of our visions pass
Through still and golden valleys where the grass
Holds secret flowers no sun shall ever parch,
We watch them glow and fade as in a glass
While through the meads the great archangels march.

O Love, my Song

O Love, my song
Is sung to the trembling string
Of Love's own lyre. O Strong,
Thy strength I sing.

Thou mak'st of flame
And my heart a quivering lyre
Vibrating thy loved name
With waves of fire.

Beauty's the sword
Of thy strength, its flashing light
The symbol of thy word
Cleaving the night.

Pulse of the world !
The joy that's every art
By which the stars are whirl'd
Beats from thy heart.

The Sword

Of the sword that is dazzlingly white,
Of the sword that is forged of a flame,
 Who has the sight ?
Lo ! to my vision it came,
I have seen it drawn forth from the sheath
 Wherein it was veiled,
From its ruddy-white jewel-set sheath,
While the lightnings through midnight it trailed
 As it flashingly spanned
The night's darkness, to darkness were nigher—
I have seen it drawn forth by the hand
 Of One who with fire
Was burningly crimson : who raised
It, and striking the bitterest rock,
 It suddenly blazed
At the stroke of the sword—with the shock
The rock of all bitterness broke,
 It melted and rolled
To a cloud at the shattering stroke,
Thawed to a cloud mist of gold
 Whose sudden ascent
With such fragrance no Brightness could brook,
It troubled the ways as it went,
 The Circles it shook.

*It is Her voice Who dwells within the emerald wall and sapphire
House of Flame :*

Behold ! a white Hawk tangled in a twisted net of dreams
Struggles no more, but lines the cords with feathers from her breast
Seeing herself within the mystic circle of My voice,
Whereat forthwith its music turns to blades and tongues of fire
Rending the bonds and weaving round the Hawk a skein of light
Raising the work and Toiler to the never-ending Day.

Love

I am as old as the eternal hills
Yet younger than the ever-youthful moon,
Younger than Hope, upspringing all too soon
On fields of Death : I as the blood that spills
On those same fields, am spent for many ills :
Though I sleep hid, my very name a rune,
My deeds are chanted to a battle tune,
And I am sown and reaped, whoever tills.

I am the Sun that slays with blinding light,
I am the easeful darkness, soothing pain,
I am the dawn of day, the dusk of night.
I am the slayer and I am the slain,
The toiling gleaner and the golden grain,
I am Life, Death, Hell's depth and Heaven's height.

Morning Flies on Wings of Flame

Morning flies on wings of flame
O'er lawn and meadow, field and fold,
Warning skies blaze out its name,
Dawn is breaking, green and gold.

The sorrows of the skies depart,
Their lambent banners flaunt and fold
And morrow fills the eyes and heart
With tragic green, with magic gold.

White Waves on the Water

White waves on the water,
Gold leaves on the tree,
As Manannan's daughter
Arose from the sea.

The bud and the blossom,
The fruit of the foam
From Ocean's dark bosom
Arose, from her home

She came at your calling
O winds of the world,
When the ripe fruit was falling
And the flowers unfurled.

She came at your crying
O creatures of earth,
And the sounds of your sighing
Made music and mirth.

She came at your keening
O dreamers of doom,
And your sleep had new meaning
And splendour and bloom.

*Your Soft Throat Throbbing with the
Breath of Song*

Your soft throat throbbing with the breath of song
And tremulous raised red lips, half-parted, plead
With art so sorrowful, our dead hearts bleed
Healed from remembrance of once-suffered wrong—
Sobbing, the slow notes die, to slumber long
With windswept memories of summer mead,
And faded days from life's shook branches freed
That once were frail, ere death had made them strong.

The flautist of the reeds, the wilful wind,
The sun that plays upon a lute of stars,
The waves that glimmer through their green cymars
Beat silver shores and frozen songs unbind,
These arm dread sorrow with sharp scimitars,
Harpist of heart-strings, play ! for Love is blind.

*Thy Scarlet Lips are like the
Sunset's Heart*

Thy scarlet lips are like the sunset's heart,
A throbbing pain that shows the aching fire,
The deepening blood-like crimson of desire
Pulsing with ardent life through every part.
Far from the striving where these torrents start
Their strains soft dying from a sobbing lyre
And mingling mournful cadences acquire
The stabbing ecstasy of God's strange dart.

For Beauty chosen weapon is of God,—
His hidden loveliness made visible :
Oft when He longs to conquer or to quell
Some stubborn soul that else might soon have trod
The hard and heavy road that leads to Hell,
Then in His love He strikes it with this rod.

Unbound, Unfettered, Chainless
I am Chained

Unbound, unfettered, chainless I am chained
A slave to serve fair Freedom, lest withheld
By force from servitude I am compelled
To league with Liberty, since sore distrained
The blind obedience to my Lord, engrained
In His poor servants, willing might be quelled
And love and light and life be lost, as eld
Is lost of which no memory hath remained.

For I am fettered to the feet of Love
With bonds of longing and of dear desire,
Bonds of my making, twisted thorn and brier
Ne'er to be broken till they bloom above
Budding and blossoming with flowers of fire,
And Heaven the flaming fragrance breathes thereof.

I saw the Sun at Midnight, Rising Red

I saw the Sun at midnight, rising red,
Deep-hued yet glowing, heavy with the stain
Of blood-compassion, and I saw It gain
Swiftly in size and growing till It spread
Over the stars ; the heavens bowed their head
As from Its heart slow dripped a crimson rain,
Then a great tremor shook It, as of pain—
The night fell, moaning, as It hung there dead.

O Sun, O Christ, O bleeding Heart of flame !
Thou giv'st Thine agony as our life's worth,
And mak'st it infinite, lest we have dearth
Of rights wherewith to call upon thy Name ;
Thou pawnest Heaven as a pledge for Earth,
And for our glory sufferest all shame.

Aristæus

Singer ! I send you these Lethæan poppies,
Now when the ninth dawn's rising beams are showing
Since the slain bulls have lain as hath commanded
Mother Cyrene :

Now is the black ewe slain, its blood slow ebbing :
Singer ! I send you these Lethæan poppies,
Berries of Proserpine, the only fruitful
Gifts from Avernus :

Fruitful in sleep, in dreams, and in forgetting.
Dreaming of lost Eurydice, O Orpheus,
Singer ! I sent you these Lethæan poppies
Will you remember ?

1847—1891

The wind rose, the sea rose,
A wave rose on the sea,
It sang the mournful singing
Of a sad centenary :

It sang the song of an old man
Whose heart had died of grief,
Whose soul had dried and withered
At the falling of the leaf :

It sang the song of a young man
Whose heart had died of pain
When Spring was black and withered
And the Winter came again.

The wind rose, the sea rose,
A wave rose on the sea,
Swelled with the mournful singing
Of a sad century.

All our best ye have branded
When the people were choosing them,
When 'twas Death they demanded
Ye laughed! Ye were losing them.
But the blood that ye spilt in the night
Crieth loudly to God,
And their name hath the strength and the might
Of a sword for the sod.

In the days of our doom and our dread
Ye were cruel and callous,
Grim Death with our fighters ye fed
Through the jaws of the gallows;
But a blasting and blight was the fee
For which ye had bartered them,
And we smite with the sword that from ye
We had gained when ye martyred them!

Terpsichore

She sways as wild and wayward as the wind
Tossing the tree-tops, lapsing low to find
And dance the golden gleaming sunlit corn
Whose blinding sheaves of light the gleaners bind.

Swift as a swallow skims the summer sea,
Dipping and rising in pure melody,
Gliding in flight with shimmering pinions spread—
A foam-fleck blown from Ocean's lips is she.

Her steps are ringing to an ancient rune
Left in the lap of Silence ; in strange tune
Her swift feet set above the swinging stars
Have struck a sudden music from the moon.

The Roads

The roads, the long white rolling roads
Lazily stretching in the Spring,
Blank scrolls they lie for writing odes,
Tragedies !—Anything !

I will set out with staff for style
And write upon their surface there,
Tell of my journey mile by mile
To Heaven—or anywhere !

Tell of adventures by the way,
Robberies, rescues, hunger—then
Of conversations day by day
With gods—or gentlemen !

Of scrip and staff and sandalled shoon
And cockled hat, and habit grey,
Of lovers underneath the moon—
Feliciores animae !

I wonder whether I, like these,
Before my writing is all done
May meet and talk beneath the trees
With One—or anyone ?

The Böig

The boundary of darkness

The Böig

Black indecision

The Böig

Soft slithery slimy impenetrable

The great Böig in the darkness.

“Do not go through,” says

The Böig

“Go round about,” says

The Böig

Soft slithery slimy impenetrable

The great Böig in the darkness.

“The Hill’s wide enough,” says

The Böig

“An alternative’s good,” says

The Böig

Soft slithery slimy impenetrable

The great Böig in the darkness.

Though the darkness is caused by

The Böig

Through the darkness develops

The Böig

Soft slithery slimy impenetrable

The great Böig in the darkness.

Dead Men's Cove

The skies walled out from the cold shut beach
Of damp grey stones,
Hard and cold sounds the sea-crows' screech
And the ebb-tide moans.

The sea strews its burden of wet soft weed
Where turns the tide,
From its stretched black fingers the fish-spawn feed,
But naught beside.

A thick dark line marks the marge of the sea
Just under the rise,
O'er this mark mingle as a mist blown free
A myriad flies.

Touch not the things that are left on the line
While the tide flows
Lest the ebb claim you as it calls "They are mine,
These dead men's clothes."

A Wave of the Sea

I am a wave of the sea
And the foam of the wave
And the wind of the foam
And the wings of the wind.

My soul's in the salt of the sea
In the weight of the wave
In the bubbles of foam
In the ways of the wind.

My gift is the depth of the sea
The strength of the wave
The lightness of foam
The speed of the wind.

I Will go Search for my Kingdom

I will go search for my kingdom,
For the white glen of icy fire,
'Tis a valley between two mountains
Guarded by thorn and brier.

And fairer than frosty moonlight
Are the two Hills above the Plain ;
I shall have great danger and hardships
And never be free from pain.

I must travel far and be weary
Ere I come within sight of my dream
But there'll be a star-thought before me
To comfort me with its gleam.

When the sun rises over that valley
Bathing the Mountains in light,
My soul shall be filled with sweetness
And my heart with all delight.

I see His Blood upon the Rose

I see his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower ;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice—and carven by his power
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His cross is every tree.

Poppies

O Sower of sorrow
From the seed of your sowing
To-morrow the mower
The wheat will be mowing.

O Reaper of ruth
Mid the roots of your reaping
Springs the truth that in sleep
Bears the fruits of all sleeping.

O Binder of sheaves
That are loose for your binding,
Withered leaves you shall find
And shall lose after finding.

The Eye-Witness

Blind, blind, blind—
O you that witness speak,
Shout to us from the peak
Of seeing, shout on the wind.

Down in the depths of the dark
Helpless we grope and crawl—
To our last despairing call,
Eye-witness, hark !

We have made this pit,
We have shut out the light,
Perpetuating the night
And all the horrors of it.

And we'd have dragged you down
To the lowest depths of all
But that you would not fall
At our feet, while you held the crown.

You nor sold your name
Buying the right to live
Nor took what we would give
For your faith, to feed the flame.

Doom, doom, doom,—
We drove you away with blows,
Drove you where no man knows
But you, a gleam in the gloom.

At your coming the dark fled away
All was alive with light—
But on us the perpetual night
Fell down and slew the day.

Now we cannot see
Whether we live or die,
But you—stoop from the sky,
Stoop and tell of the tree

Stretching to light above
From this hell's darkness below,
Tell what you see and know
Of the tree of death and love.

Lean from the golden bars
And if what we seek you find,
Shout what you see to the blind,
Shout down from the stars.

The Stars Sang in God's Garden

The stars sang in God's garden,
The stars are the birds of God ;
The night-time is God's harvest,
Its fruits are the words of God.

God ploughed his fields in the morning,
God sowed his seed at noon,
God reaped and gathered in his corn
With the rising of the moon.

The sun rose up at midnight,
The sun rose red as blood,
It showed the Reaper, the dead Christ,
Upon his cross of wood.

For many live that one may die,
And one must die that many live—
The stars are silent in the sky
Lest my poor songs be fugitive.

Epitome

My heart with heavy grief
Is shackled to the sod,
I bear the gleanéd sheaf
Of sorrow, and through tears
I see the shimmering spears
Gleam in the hand of God.

But I can still rejoice
For I have seen the Cross,
And heard the desolate Voice
Break from the heart of Christ,
When for our love he priced
Himself, and paid our loss.

And if I sing of love
And pain, and life in death,
And of a shining dove,
My songs shall mirror him,
The flaming seraphim
Shall hear their very breath

Through golden halls of song
In echoing thunders roll
A hundredfold more strong
Than my awakening strain,
And God will not disdain
The whispers of my soul.



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